"The Truth shall make you FREE."—Christ.

The Christian Freeman.

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A TALE FOR THE TIMES, AND A PLEA FOR THE POOR.

I.

"Now for the pudding!"

Thus spoke old Jacob Stagg, after having dispatched one quarter of a monstrous turkey, on the afternoon of the twenty-fifth of December, eighteen hundred and—no matter what. Jacob was seated at the head of the table. On his right was Mrs. Waggle, his housekeeper, facetiously called by him Waggy. On his left was his adopted little niece Toady. Her right name was Eugenia, but everybody called her Toady. And at the foot of the table was his confidential clerk, Tom Teazle, who though by no means an entertaining individual, was a remarkably fine listener, and as such, was admitted once per annum to old Jacob Stagg's table.

This was the little party that was seated around the old oak table, on the twenty-fifth of December, eighteen hundred and—no matter what, when at ten minutes past two, old Jacob cried, "Now for the pudding!" Mrs. Waggle gave the bell, that was always beside her, a loud ring; and after an intermission of five minutes, at the expiration of which time expectancy was at its height, the door opened, and Molly the cook entered, carrying such a pudding! Toady laughed, and clapped her hands. Tom Teazle endeavoured to smile, but could not succeed. Mrs. Waggle looked proud, for it was of her own make; and Jacob looked as though he would swallow it whole. "Aha!" exclaimed the latter, as it was placed before him; "*this* is what I call Christmas. By-the-bye, this pudding reminds me of a good thing—an excellent thing. When I was in the West Indies——"

"Oh! uncle," interrupted Toady, "you told that last Christmas!"

"For shame, Toady!" cried Mrs. Waggle.

Jacob commenced to serve out the pudding. "Well, when I was in the West Indies——"

"Lor, Mr. Jacob, I couldn't eat half that!" exclaimed the housekeeper, as he handed her a large piece of her "own make."

"Never mind; eat it you must, or I'll turn you out of doors." Mrs. Waggle made no further resistance, and the head of the table continued: "As I was saying—now, I really forget what I was saying."

"West Indies," suggested Mr. Teazle.

"Oh! yes; as I was saying, when I was in the West Indies——"

"Oh! uncle, what a clumsy man you are! You've dropped a big piece of pudding right in your lap."

"Confound that child!" exclaimed Jacob. "I'll never be able to tell that story."

Toady received a shake of the finger from Mrs. Waggle, and a look of displeasure from Mr. Teazle, both of which accomplished their object—that of silencing the child.

"When I was in the West Indies, I dined on Christmas with Sir John Dexter, a great scholar, a great wit, and a great eater. We had a tremendous turkey, and a plum-pudding as large as —my head."

Jacob had a good-sized head; and now that every eye was directed to it, it appeared to be considerably larger, so that Toady exclaimed, "Wasn't it a big one!" referring, of course, to the pudding, not the head.

"Well," continued the head of the table, "when the pudding came up, Sir

John clapped me on the back, and said 'Stagg, why are you and that pudding similar?' 'Oh! Sir John,' I replied, I don't know, unless it be that we both are likely to be *cut up* by your worship.' I had him there—ha! ha! ha!"

"Good, good—ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Teazle, who had been in the habit of laughing at this same joke every Christmas for the foregoing twelve years; but, notwithstanding the length of time it had been kept, it was yet, as Mr. Teazle said, "good."

"So you think it was good, do you, Teazle? Well, here's a glass of wine for you, Teazle. And now, Toady, if you have a story that you would like to tell, why, do so."

"I have a story to tell," returned the child, much to her uncle's astonishment, "and it is a much better story than yours, uncle, although it won't make Mr Teazle laugh."

"Indeed," cried the gentleman; "then I'm all ears." Mr. Teazle, when he said this, told three-quarters of the truth.

"Then be still," said Toady, striking her knife against the plate. "When I was coming home from church, this morning, I saw a little girl sitting on a step, crying. She wore an old dress, an old shawl, and a very old hood There she sat shivering with the cold, but no one took any notice of her. I went up to her, and asked what ailed her. She said she was very poor, and had had nothing to eat for ever so long. She had no father, and her mother was sick and could not work; and unless somebody was kind enough to assist her, she would die from starvation and cold. Wasn't that awful, uncle? It nearly made me cry. I gave her all the money I had with me, and told her to come here this evening; for I know, uncle, that you will give her something for her poor mother. Now, won't you?" Sweet, good little Toady! how angelic was the expression with which she looked up in her uncle's face! Who but a heartless wretch could deny her anything that she asked?

But Jacob was a merchant, and knew nothing outside of his counting-house. He had always lived in ease and luxury, and what knew he of beggary and starvation? Nothing, absolutely nothing. "Toady," he said, looking down upon his niece's beautiful face, "you are a child. You know nothing of the world. Every thing is not what it seems. That girl who has excited your sympathy is an impostor. She is a beggar, not from necessity, but from choice. And if she comes here to-night, you slam the door in her face, Mrs. W., or I'll slam the door in yours."

"Oh! uncle, you won't be so cruel. You don't mean what you say."

"Waggy, dear," calmy spoke Jacob, "Toady is getting tiresome. You had better take her up stairs."

II.

It was four o'clock, on the twenty-fifth of December, eighteen hundred and —no matter what. Jacob was in his library, seated before the blazing fire, in his great arm-chair He was alone, and was about to enjoy what he called his "afternoon nap." "What a foolish child Toady is!" he muttered.

"Not so foolish as you!"

Whose voice was that? Jacob saw no one in the room besides himself, so he merely said, "I've been drinking too much wine, but Toady is foolish."

"Toady is not foolish, old Jacob!"

There was no mistake this time. The voice was real; and moreover, it came from the fire. Jacob looked therein, and saw standing upon a red-hot piece of coal, a little man, not more than six inches in height. He was attired in a tight fitting suit of red, which suit corresponded with the colour of his hair and face. Upon seeing that he was observed, he nodded familiarly to Jacob, crying in a shrill voice, "Hollo, old Jacob!"

"Who are you?" responded that gentleman, gruffly.

"Nobody. But don't trouble yourself on my account. I'll waive all ceremony, and make myself at home;" saying which, in one bound he jumped from the fire to Jacob's long, red nose, which he straddled as he would a horse, and thumped his heels against the sides of his seat, laughing immoderately all the time. Poor Jacob felt the burning-hot contact of the imp's body with *his* nose, but do what he would, he could not shake him off.

"Now, Jacob, steady, steady! and

I'll talk to you. What have you done to-day, Jacob?"

"Nothing."

"Very true, Jacob. Nothing but eat, Jacob, and drink, Jacob, and sleep, Jacob. For shame, Jacob!"

"I couldn't help it!"

"Very true, Jacob. You couldn't help it, when you had turkey, pudding, and wine upon your table, and an untroubled mind, Jacob. But everybody is not like you, Jacob. I heard the bell ring this morning; who rang it Jacob?"

"Beggar."

"Very true, Jacob. A beggar. But what did you do?"

"Send him away—had nothing."

"Nothing, Jacob? What is in that safe, yonder?"

"Noth—nothing."

"That's a lie, Jacob. But you'll not tell that lie again—oh! no." After saying this, the imp took from his pocket a tiny whistle, which he blew several times. As the last sound died away, innumerable little fellows issued from every corner of the room. A score or two of them, after a few seconds' work, managed to open old Jacob's great iron safe; and that unhappy man saw each little rascal shoulder his gold and run off with it. The safe was soon emptied of every thing, and carried off. Then they removed all the furniture, after which, at a given signal from their master, who still sat astride of the merchant's nose, they all vanished. And now the room was changed from a splendid library to a small, dirty apartment, with no fire, and with little light. Jacob saw that his clothes were old and ragged, and that he was sitting upon an old block of wood.

"Jacob!" shrieked the imp, "you have nothing now!" And he jumped from the nose to the fireplace, and up the chimney.

"O!" moaned Jacob, "I'm cold, and I'm hungry; have I no friends to take me from this horrible place?"

The door now opened, and a little, girl, with a pale, thin face, entered. She had nothing on but an old torn dress, and a shawl which was thrown over her head.

"Who's that?" cried Jacob.

"Your niece!" screamed a well-known voice in his ear.

Yes, it was his niece; and she ran to him, and threw her cold arms around his neck, sobbing, "My poor uncle! poor uncle!"

"Oh! Toady, Toady, what means this? Where have you been?"

"I've been out, uncle, begging; but I was turned from every door that I knocked at. No one would believe my story; no one would give me even a morsel of bread."

"Have we no friend, then, Toady?"

"None, uncle, except God."

Old Jacob burst into tears. "Toady," he said, "let us put our trust in Him. He will not desert us."

III.

"Why, uncle, you've been crying. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Toady, nothing. I think I have been dreaming. You are all right, Toady, are you not?"

"Yes, uncle, but you are crying again."

"Oh! Toady, I am a wicked man; don't you think I am?"

"Oh! no—except when you are cross, like you were to-day."

"Toady, has that beggar girl been here yet?"

"Yes, Mrs. Waggle has just sent her away."

"Sent her away! Run, Toady, and bring her back! Run as fast as you can! Bring her here, and as many more as you can find! Run, Toady, run!"

Toady did run, and as fast, too, as her little legs could carry her. Old Jacob walked up and down the room, with his head bowed, and his hands clasped behind him. At the slightest noise, he would stop, and listen eagerly. But when he found that it was not the noise that he wanted to hear, he would resume his walk, saying, "Toady is a long time gone!" But at length, Toady's well-known footsteps were heard ascending the stairs; and a moment afterwards she bounded in the room, followed by a girl, precisely the same one that Jacob saw in his dream, with the exception of the face.

"I found her, uncle," cried Toady, "and here she is!" Old Jacob placed the shivering child in his comfortable chair by the fire. Then Mrs. Waggle was called, and ordered, much to her

surprise, to hunt up a complete outfit of clothes for the little mendicant, which she was not very long in doing. The child was afterwards washed, and dressed in her new clothes; and she looked so neat and so happy in them, that old Jacob actually kissed her; and he opened his safe, too, and counted out gold which he placed in her hand, with actually another kiss. This drew the declaration from the amiable housekeeper, that "he must be mad." But his "madness" did not end there. He took the girl to her wretched home, which he soon transformed into a palace. "Aba!" he exclaimed, "I know what Christmas is now! It is not roast turkey or plum-pudding; is it, Toady? Of course not! And—and do you know what I am going to do, Toady? I am going to make every day Christmas—I am, Toady, and you shall help me!"

Jacob Stagg kept his promise, and thereafter he was a changed man. He loved his table less, and his neighbour more. And it is stated upon the best of authority, that the following Christmas he actually forgot to tell his West Indian joke.

Old Jacob led a long, happy, and prosperous life. There may have been some who envied him his wealth, but everybody envied him his happiness.

OUGHT THERE TO BE A STATE-CHURCH?

I. *No*—because it is an absurdity to entrust the care of religion to governments composed of men holding various religious opinions, and who are not even required to have any religion at all.

II. *No*—because every man is himself responsible to God for his religious belief, and not the government for him.

III. *No*—because the people have as much right, and are quite as able, to attend to their religious as to their secular affairs.

IV. *No*—because there ought to be perfect religious equality, and not patronage and support to one or more favoured sects, and only toleration for all others.

V. *No*—because it is unjust to make one man pay for another man's Church.

VI. *No*—because religion ought not to be maintained by bribes, by physical force, penalties, imprisonment, or civil disqualifications, and it is by such means only that governments can effect their purposes.

VII. *No*—because religion should be supported by the voluntary offerings of its own friends, and not by exactions wrung by law from the whole community.

VIII. *No*—because the haughty pretensions and social exclusiveness of the clergy and members of the State-church degrade and injure all other denominations, and create jealousy and ill-will.

IX. *No*—because every Church ought to exercise the right of self-government, but a Church paid and authorized by the State must necessarily be under the control of the State.

X. *No*—because, while the Church cannot make the State religious, the State will make the Church political.

XI. *No*—because State-churches have always been more or less inefficient, persecuting and corrupt, the supporters of arbitrary power against the people, and the upholders of political and social abuses.

XII. *No*—because, finally, while State churches violate the rights of conscience, and impose heavy pecuniary burdens and inflict other evils on the people, they have failed to advance the cause of religion, and, by their false representations of its character, have led men to regard it with suspicion or disgust.

Englishmen! how long will you allow common sense to be outraged, conscience to be violated, injustice to be done, your hard-earned money to be misapplied and wasted, and Christianity to be caricatured, by the existence and working of a State-church? You have no interest in maintaining the union between Church and State, and—regard being had to existing interests—no party could justly complain of its dissolution. And this change can be made only by Parliament, and in compliance with the expressed wishes of the people. Let the people, then, at once, apply themselves systematically and vigorously to the great work!

FACTS

RESPECTING OUR LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE CONGREGATIONS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

SOME may not have had the opportunity of seeing the excellent leading article in the *Inquirer*, of the 22nd November, from which the following is an extract:—

"Our special object is not to incite compassion already kindled in every English heart by the tale of woe, nor urge claims on succour already most promptly and generously acknowledged; it is rather briefly to point out the influence the present distress has upon our cause in the North, and indicate a way in which that cause may, under its heavy trials, be most effectually supported by our churches situated out of the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Cheshire.

"As many of our readers are aware, some of our most promising and, till now, flourishing congregations in the North are composed chiefly, if not wholly, of working people. Of these there are examples at Heywood, Rochdale (Clover Street Chapel), Hyde (Flowery-field), Mottram, Mossley, Padiham, Newchurch, Swinton, and elsewhere. Not a few of the members of these congregations, and, in fact, more than one of the congregations themselves are seceders from Methodism, and have brought with them into their new faith the ardour and unction of their old. In the times of their prosperity they supported, with a lavish hand, their chapels and Sunday-schools, sacrificing, with a self-forgetful zeal, time, and thought, and money upon the grand objects of instructing the young, enlightening the ignorant, and preaching the Gospel of universal benevolence to men of every creed. We have known factory lasses putting a year's savings into the collecting plate at the school sermons, reaching often as large a sum as a guinea a piece. Others have contributed their five or even ten guineas a piece to a school or chapel building fund.

"General and Local Relief Committees, and, still more, Boards of Guardians, with every exertion they may put forth, of necessity leave large room for all the assistance which can be bestowed by private charity. The class composing our own poorer congregations in the North are the very last to avail themselves of the public means of relief. Many would rather "clem" (starve) than apply to the parish, and are most unwilling even to receive grants from Relief Committees. Silently these heroes and heroines in humble life endure their sorrows, and have to be sought out and urged to ask relief, in homes where, with shut doors and drawn-down blinds, they anxiously hide their poverty from every eye.

"Let our ministers and Sunday-school teachers, then, be supplied with ample means, than they have yet been, to assist these our destitute brothers and sisters, by the only method left open—that of private benevolence. It is sad to think of venerable elders, of once vigorous youths and sprightly maidens, and tender little ones, either perishing at home for want, or, as they must be unless effectual aid be speedily sent, compelled to quit their native land, leaving behind them empty schools and silent chapels."

From information that we have collected, it appears that, besides the wealthy congregations which are supporting their own poor and doing much to alleviate the neighbouring distress, and other congregations which can only support their own by a great struggle, there are some 28 societies in great need:—they reckon over 900 adults and 1,900 Sunday-school and members' children amongst them, in distress; the numbers varying in different cases from 25 to 250 and over, and giving an average of 100 in each. These figures do not represent the total distress in these societies, nor the many who are making a bare subsistence by partial relief, short time, &c.

It would be impossible to describe the severity of the sufferings of many congregations, and the labour and trials which devolve upon their ministers in consequence. The following extracts from *letters* we have by us, may give some idea of the need there is of affording them, at once, some more regular and reliable assistance; and confirm the

extract we have taken from the "Inquirer":—

(1.) "We are in a deplorable condition, and really need the help of the charitable. I calculate 160 as the adult attendance on my services of those who are in need—I cannot number the children.. ....I am occupied all day long in trying to alleviate the sufferings of my people, and am now making visits to them all, and distributing some *small* funds which have been placed at my disposal. I shall be glad of any help whatever."

(2.) "I expect the distress to become very great ere many weeks..... I am heartily glad to find that our brethren are taking the matter in hand, as our schools, especially in Lancashire, are in great suffering."

(3.) "We built a chapel and school at a cost of £1,800, £270 of which yet remain unpaid; but we were getting on very well until overtaken by the present calamity, which I am sorry to say is seriously felt here, as the members are chiefly factory operatives and small shopkeepers, not having one wealthy member amongst us; several of the members are in receipt of either parish or local relief."

(4.) "Most of the members (about 400) of our church and school are factory operatives. About three months ago we commenced a sewing class, and appealed to that part of our congregation who had anything to spare, and they responded according to their limited means most nobly, by which means we have been able to relieve many very needy cases in the way of necessary clothing; but now that source has been exhausted, and the wants and suffering have increased on our hands. We shall therefore be very thankful for whatever our Unitarian friends can give us to relieve our present unprecedented distress."

(5.) "I am happy to be able to say that we—the Unitarians—from some cause or other, are not nearly so dependent, in proportion to our numbers, as some denominations. Though ours is a working class congregation—there being only one or two small manufacturers amongst us—the members generally, have, during good times, been thoughtful, industrious, provident people, who have accumulated a little capital, and invested it in the purchase of shares in co-operative mills, &c., the profit arising from which, with their weekly earnings have been sufficient to make them comfortable, and indeed, independent of any slight commercial panic. But, now that all the mills are stopped, or working only short time at a loss, and the property of co-operative companies proving a burden rather than a blessing, they are reduced to poverty with the thoughtless, improvident, reckless, who, from absolute destitution, can *claim* relief in some shape or other, while the honourable working-class shareholders are necessitated to sell at a mere nominal price, or pledge their shares with provision dealers before their wants can be relieved. The administrations of relief, though admirable, is, it must be confessed, yet defective, since I think none want from food; at the same time it is a well-known fact, that the industrious shareholders are, at the present time, the greatest sufferers by this dire calamity, since, in addition to the burdensomeness of holding mill property, the Relief Committees are unwilling to assist such persons"

"While the people have so great difficulty in supporting themselves, you will see that it is not to be expected that they should be able to support their ministers; hence where chapels are unendowed, as are those of most of the Lancashire working classes, the ministers will have to suffer with their people, if supported at all."

(6.) "The number of the suffering have increased rapidly of late, but I think it stands almost as high as it can do. We are receiving 10s. a week from Manchester; that is all we get." [We may explain, that this 10s. a week is from the Unitarian Committee, and is divided among thirty families—i. e., 4d. a family per week.]

(7.) "Fifty of our Sunday scholars are in great need of relief—both food and clothing.....The picture of the state of things in the leader in the 'Inquirer' is quite true as regards this place. The poor-rates and public relief fund do not meet the necessities of the times. I fear disease will set in, if we do not get

money and clothing. Our school has been almost broken up through poverty."

(8.) "The rule laid down by the Relief Committee of this place is to give no assistance where the income of a family amounts to 3s. each per week, however small the family may be; and when the family consists of four or more persons, to give no aid if the income from all sources amounts to 2s. 6d. each per week. Now, there are many instances where it would be pleasant to give more than this, especially to the aged, or where there is great need of clothing."

(9.) "Most of our people are receiving (if out of work) from the relief fund or the guardians, but still something is needed to supplement the small pittance they receive."

(10.) We have four Sunday-school teachers (married men) long out of employ, in great poverty, having parted with every thing out of their homes they can possibly do without, to whom a little help would be gladly and gratefully received, and well spent—for they are 'good men and true.'.....Left-off clothes of all kinds would be exceedingly welcome. We have, of course, many more in bad circumstances, but the cases indicated in the return are all we would press on your attention at present."

(11.) "Sickness and over-work in connection with our poor have prevented my answering before.....I cannot get the worst cases to make known their actual condition. I send you those whose distress I am daily relieving by such aid in the shape of food and clothing as by *chance* charity is placed at my disposal; they are all in immediate connexion with my chapel and school—I have not taken into account those poor people who I frequently help though they do not attend my services."

(12.) "Some of our families are very badly off. The F——'s employ upwards of 2000 hands in this neighbourhood; they keep some of their mills running at a considerable loss, and they pay their work-people who are accustomed to work at those that are not running, at the rate of three day's wages per week; but, though my chapel belongs to them, my congregation is not altogether made up of their work-people—scarcely any of those I have spoken of as badly off work at their mills.....All our people are working-people. I am full of occupation in connection with sewing classes, relief committees, &c. &c. If you could aid me a little in relieving those of my poor people to whom I have alluded, you would be doing the work of God and would make me happy."

(13.) "The terrible extent of the suffering cannot be fully realized by any one who does not witness it. The best part of our operatives have not asked for help until they have exhausted all their savings and parted with all they can spare of furniture aud clothing. Hence, many families who were living in comfort and respectability, with provision (as they thought) for sickness and old age, have now exhausted their resources and are dependent on charity to save them from absolute starvation. There was a long period of short work before the entire cessation of employment, and this prevents the sufferers from having anything now to fall back upon. There is a very painful struggle, as I frequently witness, before these men can bring themselves to ask for help. In many cases they have to be sought out and the assistance *pressed* upon them. Sometimes they shut themselves up at home, and would perish if no one looked after them. I could fill a volume with details of cases which have come under my own observation, proving these assertions."

Surely those under whose eyes this paper comes will make an effort to spread the knowledge of these sufferings and temptations which have fallen so heavily on our northern brethren, and determine at once to get up a weekly subscription in the society to which they are connected—making arrangement that the young and the poor may even be able to cast in their 'mite' and have a part in a good work of charity and Christian sympathy whilst they have an opportunity.

Surely our fire-sides will be more cheerful when we draw around, feeling that we have done what we can to stay the sufferings of our own household of faith. There is a Committee of our ministers in Manchester receiving and distributing the gifts of our Churches. The Rev. Wm. Gaskell, of Manchester, is the chairman of this Committee.

BISHOP COLENSO.

"I WISH your fine Bishop Colenso had been at Church this evening," said Jane to her husband, as soon as she returned from the service, "he would have got a talking to that would have done him good, and made him think shame of himself and his infidel book. The vicar did not leave him a leg to stand on. I am sure it did us all good—I feel it did."

"Well Jane," said her husband, "but what did the vicar say, and how did he answer all the points the Bishop of Natal has raised?"

"Oh, he answered them all at once; he said it was want of faith, 'Without which it is impossible to please God.' This indeed was the text. And then he illustrated what kind of faith we should have, so plainly, I wonder that anybody can doubt."

"How did he illustrate faith, Jane, and show the kind of faith we should have?"

"He told us of a pious woman who had an infidel neighbour, and this infidel was always proposing some doubt or another about the contents of the Bible—so, one day, he asked her if she believed that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. She said 'she surely did.' Then, said this man, 'that large as a whale is, it could not swallow a man. That only a very small fish could pass down its throat.' She answered him at once, that had the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, she would have not hesitated to believe.' Her infidel friend never troubled her again. 'This', the vicar said, 'was the faith that vanquished all doubt. If Colenso and his readers had such faith as this pious woman, they would not disturb the peace of the Church.'"

"I marvel, Jane, that the vicar, an educated man, should talk in this style. A man swallow a whale! 'This he could have believed if it had been in the Bible.' And he called it *faith*. I call it *folly*, Jane, and am sorry you could approve of such a saying. If the Bible had affirmed that man was more powerful than his Maker, you would have called this a mistake. If the Bible had said that *a part* is more than *a whole*, you would have said this could not be so. And when your vicar tells you he could believe that a man might swallow a whale, on the authority of the Bible, he does in fact say he could believe a part to be more than a whole, and prepares you to swallow anything, Jane.

The bible, and God, and truth, have a better friend in the faith of Bishop Colenso than in your vicar. The truth will last longest, Jane. We properly call the Bible, 'God's word,' but we do not mean by this every word of the Bible. And they do the best service to religion who sift out the mistakes of the Bible, and present to God's children religious truth purified from historical mistakes. This is what Bishop Colenso is doing, and it would be better for you, and the vicar as well, to help him, at least not to hinder him by abuse, in this good work."

FAITH AND WORKS.

BY ALICE CARY.

NOT what we think, but what we do,
Makes saints of us; all stiff and cold,
The outlines of the corpse show through
The cloth of gold.

And in despite the outward sin,
Despite belief with creeds at strife,
The principle of love within
Leavens the life.

It is for fancied good, I claim,
That men do wrong, not wrong's desire;
Wrapping themselves, as 'twere, in flame,
To cheat the fire.

Not what God gives, but what he takes,
Uplifts us to the holiest height;
On grief's rough crags life's current breaks
To diamond light.

From transient evil I do trust
That we a final good shall draw;
That in confusion, death, and dust,
Are light and law;

That He whose glory shines among
The eternal stars descends to mark
This foolish little atom, swung
Loose in the dark.

But though I should not thus receive
A sense of order and control,
My God, I could not disbelieve
My sense of soul.

For though, alas! I can but see
A hand's breadth backward or before,
I *am!* and since I am, must be
For evermore.

OUR GIFTS.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

"Morris," said mamma, last night, as she seated herself by the round table, and took up from her work-basket the new white plaid apron which she was hemming for me, "it's Christmas, day after to-morrow, and we must see about getting some presents for the children."

I was in the corner, putting my doll to sleep in the little wicker cradle, which aunt Jerusha gave me last New Year's, but I stopped singing "lullaby," and my heart gave a great big bound as mamma spoke.

"Lucretia," said papa, unrolling his newspaper, "it's the hardest winter that I ever had to weather, and I can't afford to spend any money in gimcracks this year. It's all nonsense to throw away so much money in trash of this kind every year, and it is high time the children should learn to use a little self-denial. They'll need the lesson as they grow older."

"But children are children, Morris, after all," answered mamma, dropping her sewing into her lap, and looking at papa very earnestly. You can't make them men and women; and their little hearts are so set on these Christmas presents, that I can't bear to refuse them. We can get up something cheap, you know; and I'd rather go without anything—my dinner for the day even—than witness the children's disappointment."

"You talk just like an over-indulgent mother, Lucretia," said papa; and his voice was quite irritated. "The truth is, we've got to begin to retrench somewhere, and there's no use disguising that. Times are growing worse for me every day, and Christmas gifts, and flummery of that kind, ought to go first. You are a sensible woman, and must see the matter as I do."

I don't think mamma *did;* but she didn't speak again, for papa leant over his paper in a way which said very plainly that he considered the matter settled, and did not want any more words about it. Papa seems disturbed and fretted now, almost all the time; but mamma says it is because he is so troubled about his business. In a little while a gentleman called to see him, and mamma looked up to the clock.

"Come, dear, it is past your bed-time," she said.

After I had said my prayers, and was warmly tucked up, mamma leaned over for a good-night kiss, and I put my arms around her neck, and I whispered:

"Mamma, won't Willie or I have any Christmas presents?"

"What makes you ask, my little girl?"

"Because I was in the corner, putting Dolly to sleep, and I overheard all that papa said."

"Well, Mary, then won't you try and see how good and brave a little girl you can be, and try and not feel bad because papa thinks that he can't afford to give you any presents this year? I'm sorry, my dear child; but it can't be helped."

"Yes, I'll try very hard, mamma."

But there was something heavy at my heart, and I think that she guessed it, by the way she kissed me.

To-day Willie went across the street, to see Charles and Edward Parker, and he came home with his blue eyes as big as saucers.

"Oh! Mary" he said, they're going to have such a splendid Christmas tree, with little wax tapers and presents hung all over it. It's just splendid. And I've been wondering all the afternoon what sort of Christmas gifts I should have—whether they'll be a rocking horse, and a pair of skates, and a new drum, or what; and I can't hardly wait for to-morrow to come."

I took Willie off into one corner, and told him all that papa had said, and how he couldn't have any Christmas presents this year, but we must be very brave, and not mind it at all.

Poor little Willie! his bright face grew so grave and long, as he listened. He is a very little boy, three years younger than I; and his lip quivered, and quivered, and at last he ran over to mamma, and laid his head in her lap, and said with a great sob:

"O! mamma, shan't I have any Christmas presents this year, like Charlie and Edward Parker?"

Poor mamma, she lifted up his little curly head and kissed him, and tried to

comfort him all that she could, but it didn't seem to do much good; and I forgot all about my Christmas gifts—I felt so sorry for Willie.

And he was sober all the rest of the afternoon, and I couldn't even get him to build a Grecian temple; and after tea mamma put him to bed, and she said to papa: "Poor little fellow! It made my heart ache to hear him sigh and sigh in his sleep!"

"What's the matter with the boy?" asked papa, looking up in surprise.

"Oh! you see he's learned this afternoon that he can't have any Christmas presents to-morrow, and he's taken it to heart—dreadfully! Besides, he's been over to the Parkers this afternoon, and Charlie and Edward have been filling his head with the splendid Christmas-tree they are to have, and that makes it doubly hard to think that he must go without anything."

"Ahem!" said papa. That was all, but I thought he looked disturbed.

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This morning the sun was laughing in at my window when I opened my eyes, and I looked right at the corner of the mantel, where my stocking hung last year, with the face of my wax doll peeping out of the top of the leg; but there wasn't any stocking there this morning.

I turned over and called out to Willie, who has the room next to mine, "Merry Christmas, Willie!"

"It does not seem a bit like 'Merry Christmas,' Mary," and I knew by the sound of his voice just how he was feeling.

We went down stairs together, and said our "Merry Christmas" to papa and mamma; but somehow a shadow seemed to rest on everything.

After we got at the table, Willie suddenly burst right into a great sob, while he was eating his omelet. Papa set down his cup of coffee.

"Why, what is the matter with my little boy?" he asked.

"I was thinking," sobbed my little brother, "about Charlie and Edward Parker's Christmas-tree, and how happy they must be this morning."

Papa looked very tenderly on Willie.

"Well, be brave, my little man, and don't cry any more."

The tears came into my eyes then, but I swallowed them back.

"Poor little things!" I overheard mamma say to papa after breakfast. "If I could have got at it, I'd rather taken in some work, and earned a little money myself, to have bought them some toys, than see them so disappointed. You don't realize, Morris, how deep such things enter into children's lives."

"May be you're right, Lucretia—may be you're right," said papa, and then he put his hands behind him, and walked whistling up and down the room two or three times; and at last he came over to Willie and me, and patted us on the shoulder, and said very kindly, "Come, little folks, cheer up, you shall have a 'Merry Christmas' after all," and then he went out, and somehow my heart felt lighter after this, and I knew that Willie's did too.

About an hour later, the bell rang, and then Biddy came in, with a broad smile on her rosy face, bringing two great bundles, one for me, and one for Willie. Mamma looked as glad as we, and hurried to cut the cords; and there was a beautiful china tea-set, and two great white sugar birds for me; and for Willie, such a pretty carriage, with two horses prancing before it, and a ship made of glass, all rigged out most beautifully. Willie and I danced up and down the room, and clapped our hands for joy.

"You shall have your 'Merry Christmas' for all, my dear darlings," said mamma, kissing us both.

And so we did. And late in the morning the bell rang again, and there came a present for Willie and me, from the Christmas-tree across the street.

Mine was the funniest little cottage, with a garden behind, and a woman feeding chickens there; and Willie's was a box filled with soldiers all dressed in blue uniform, and there was a trumpet and a drum. Mamma said we acted like two wild Indians over them, but I knew she was as glad as we.

"Oh? Morris," said mamma, when papa came home to dinner, "you ought to have been here when your presents came. You'd have seen a sight you could never forget."

"Well, Lucretia, I believe that you

women get nearer the truth than we men, after all. Children are children, and it's no use trying to make them anything else. Come, little folks, are you having a 'Merry Christmas?'"

Willie and I answered together: "Indeed we are, papa; indeed we are."

GIVE! FOR ALL ARE GIVEN.

Give—O give, O learn the lesson,
Borne along on every breeze;
Comes anew with every season,
Visits lands beyond the seas.

Give—the earth with gladness yields her
Richest stores of choicest food;
Give—it is the Great Creator
Fills the universe with good.

Give—the young require from you
Lessons of humility
To strengthen them, their journey through
Life, to immortality.

Give—thy brother low in sickness,
Needs thy help to give relief,
Speak in kindness, words of meekness,
Lead him to the Saviour's feet.

Give—the drunkard needs your kindness,
To reclaim him from his guilt,
Lead him from his wretched darkness,
To the light, just where Thou wilt.

Give—the rivers gently pour their
Treasures bountiful and free,
While the earth is rendered fruitful
By the waters of the sea.

Give—the flowers their fragrance spreading,
Fill the air with odours sweet,
Yet they lose not ought by giving,
Mother earth her gifts repeat

Give—thy sleep gives strength and vigour
To thy toil-worn weakened frame,
And the sick one on his pillow,
Rests in sleep from aching pain.

Give—nor may we while receiving
Blessings day by day from heaven,
E'er neglect our Christian work, to
Give—for all we have is given.

Give—more blessed far it is
Than richest gifts we may receive;
Give in early morn of life,
Manhood's prime, and grey-hair'd eve.

Give—and you shall then receive, good
Measure, pressed and shaken down,
Running over with delightful
Blessings, which your deeds shall crown.

Give—in love whate'er thou givest,
Seek and ask for no return,
Live a life of Christ-like living,
For the Saviour's precepts yearn.

D. M., *Coseley.*

BEGINNING OF THE YEAR IN VARIOUS NATIONS.

The Chaldeans' and the Egyptians' years were dated from the autumnal equinox. The ecclesiastical year of the Jews began in the spring; but in civil affairs they retain the epoch of the Egyptian year. The ancient Chinese reckoned from the new moon nearest the middle of Aquarius. The year of Romulus commenced in March, and that of Numa in January. The Turks and Arabs date the year from the 16th of July. Dremschid, or Gremschid, king of Persia, observed on the day of his public entry into Persepolis that the sun entered into Aries; and in commemoration of this fortunate event he ordered the beginning of the year to be removed from the autumnal to the vernal equinox. The Brachmans begin their year with the new moon in April. The Mexicans begin their year in February, when the leaves begin to grow green. The Abyssinians have five idle days at the end of the year, which commences on the 26th of August.

The American Indians reckon from the first appearance of the new moon at the vernal equinox. The Mohammedans begin their year the minute the sun enters Aries. The Venetians, Florentines, and Pisans in Italy, began the year at the vernal equinox. The French year, during the reign of the Merovingian race, began the day on which the troops were reviewed, which was the first day of March. Under the Carlovingians it began on Christmas day, and at a later date on Easter day. The ecclesiastical year begins on the first Sunday in Advent. Charles IX. appointed, in 1564, that for the future the civil year should commence on the first of January, The Julian Calendar which was so called from Julius Cæsar, and is the old account of the year, was reformed by Pope Gregory, in 1652, which plan was suggested by Lewis Lilio, a Calabrian astronomer. The Dutch and the Protestants in Germany introduced the new style in 1700. The ancient clergy reckoned from the 25th of March, and this method was observed in Britain until the introduction of the new style, A.D. 1752; after which our year commenced on the first of January.

UNITARIAN MARTYRS.

By Thomas Bowring.

[SECOND PART.]

Unitarians can boast of those among them who have sealed their religion with their blood. In my previous statement, I mentioned that the early Socinians fled from persecution in Italy to Poland, and many of them died at the stake; that Michael Servetus was burned at Geneva at the instigation of John Calvin for denying the doctrine of the Trinity; that many persons under the name of Arians suffered in the cruel reigns of the eighth Henry and his daughter Mary; and that during the reign of Edward the Sixth, Joan Bocher, a lady of good family, and George Van Parre, a foreigner, were condemned to the stake at the instigation of Cranmer and Ridley for denying the Deity of Christ.

We have few records of Unitarianism during the persecution of the reign of Queen Mary. Unitarians were questionless among the sufferers, indeed we are informed that from what was considered a refinement in cruelty—orthodox and heretics—meaning Trinitarians and Unitarians, were bound together, to die at the same stake, and the so-called orthodox were pleased to regard this as the heaviest part of their sentence. Whilst confined in the common prison a Trinitarian attempted to justify his spitting in the face of an Arian, as one without the pale of Christian courtesy. But the governing powers were in no humour to make nice distinctions. Heresies, great and small, were punished alike, as dangerous to the state and to the eternal welfare of the people, the children of the State. Calvinists, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Socinians perished under the same stern law; the believers in the simple Unity and in a Trinity in Unity, found the flames kindle upon them, and their ashes were undistinguishably mingled, whilst their spirits returned to the God who gave them.

The darkly bigoted Mary, most happily for the nation, died after a few years' reign of terror and confusion, and her sister Elizabeth succeeded to the throne. Queen Elizabeth, in religion, carried matters with a high hand, and would suffer no non-conformity to established modes of faith or worship. The Catholics and the Puritans often felt the weight of her indignation, but penal fires were reserved for the Unitarians alone. The favorite nickname for those called also at that time heretics, was Anabaptist, as if they were of the sect which (under that designation) some years before in Germany committed horrid excesses and cruelty. A society of so-called Dutch Anabaptists in London, but who were quiet, simple-hearted Unitarian Christians, were disturbed in their worship, and many of them committed to prison, but two of the number "more obstinate than the rest," more firm and consistent in their faith, died at the stake in Smithfield.

The celebrated martyrologist John Fox, whom Elizabeth highly esteemed, wrote to her a letter earnestly requesting she would spare the lives of the two persons just mentioned, though he expresses great detestation of their peculiar tenets. The letter has been remarked as a piece of most elegant Latinity, far better than this is the genuine Christian spirit it breathes, not the less so, because of the narrowness of some of the writer's views, but the Queen was inexorable. She had taken it into her head that it was the business of God's vicegerent on earth to vindicate his honour by punishing all who, in her opinion, derogated from it. A most dangerous mistake in princes who thus violate the sacred rights of conscience, forgetting who has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay."

James the First was, in many respects, one of the most contemptible monarchs that have worn the English crown. He was shallow, pedantic, and vain, and had far more learning than sense to make a proper use of it. In his reign two Unitarians were burned alive. In the year 1611—the very year in which the translation of the Scriptures, under the King's auspices, appeared — Bartholomew Legate — a man whom all accounts represent as of superior mind and acquirements, well learned in his Bible, and able to discourse admirably on religious topics, and whose life adorned the doctrine he professed—was accused to the King of Arianism; with characteristic conceit, James sent for Legate, hoping to give right royal reasons for his conversion. They held together two or three conferences; at the last of these the King, according to his own acknowledgment, desirous of entrapping Legate, suddenly asked him if he prayed daily to Christ. His intrepid opponent replied that in his more unenlightened days this had been his practice, but for several years past he had foregone it. The unmanly despot, to conceal his mortification, put an end to the conversation by treating Legate with gross indignity, saying, "Away, base fellow; it shall never be said that one stayeth in my presence that hath never prayed to our Saviour for seven years together." Legate suffered with great constancy, at Smithfield. And in the following month another Unitarian sealed his testimony at Lichfield. This was Edward Wightman, who was condemned by Neale, Bishop of the diocese, himself a fawning time-server, and a fit instrument of his master's bigotry. Neale deserves the contempt of posterity for his profane adulation of James and the slavish doctrines he endeavoured to inculcate. We have little account of Wightman or of his principles, save that they are recorded as being "far worse" than the doctrines for which Legate suffered. He was charged with holding *ten* heresies. The truth is, he was to be crushed under the *weight of charges*, and none was considered too incredible to be placed to his account. His trial was a mere mockery, the obsequious prelate being determined on his ruin. Wightman was burned alive on a conspicuous spot near Lichfield, and, as we have observed, he was the last who suffered by fire in this country for religion. He thus closes the list of those who have glorified God by fire.

The troublous times of Charles the First were not so unfavourable to the Unitarians as to the Nonconformists at large. It would appear that

many persons of high rank were inclined to Unitarian views; of these Lord Falkland, one of the most virtuous and single-minded men of his day, was the principal. His conversation and example were very influential. Whilst Chillingworth, Hales, and Selden, though connected with the Church, were always regarded as imbued with Unitarian sentiments. The Long Parliament seems to have taken the alarm. The majority of its members were Calvinists, and hence persecuting statutes, already referred to, were enacted against deniers of the Trinity. Under these, John Biddle, a native of Gloucester, a man of extraordinary learning and of the most fervent piety, was arrested; his books in defence of Unitarianism were burned by the common hangman, and his death was moved by certain members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. He was, however, kept a long time in prison, and at length under the protectorate of Cromwell, who, to his honour be it said, never was a persecutor, he was sent to the Scilly Islands, there to be out of the reach of his enemies. He returned to London not long before Cromwell's death, and was for some time unmolested. He opened there a private place for Unitarian worship; but early in the reign of Charles the Second, his little meeting-house was entered by the constables, and he, in the act of preaching, was seized and committed to prison, and there he died, so that he may well be regarded a Unitarian Martyr. We are informed that he could repeat all the Epistles of Paul in the original Greek; and the strength and earnestness of his devotional feeling were such that complete prostration was his general posture at prayer. He succeeded in gathering round him a small but faithful band of followers, and they kept alive the precious truth of the Divine Unity, till it was acknowledged and revered by numbers.

The last British Anti-Trinitarian Martyr was a poor young man of Scotland, named Aikenhead. His was a most cruel as well as melancholy case, and one which reflects the utmost disgrace on every party concerned. The full particulars will be best known from Macaulay's History of England. Thomas Aikenhead was but eighteen when he was hanged under an old Scottish statute, for blasphemy, near Edinburgh. This was just at the close of the seventeenth century. He was a youth of irreproachable morals and of studious habits, but he had, like other young men of more knowledge than judgment, acquired a habit of talking laxly on religious subjects, but which time would doubtless have amended. He denied the Trinity; and this was the head and front of his offending, and for this, under a strained construction of a very cruel law in itself, he was prosecuted and suffered death. A more atrocious legal murder was never committed. Though he had said some foolish things against the Scriptures, yet he died with a Bible in his hands, and he prayed fervently and with many tears, in his dungeon. The people were horror-struck at his death, and doubtless it had the effect of staying further prosecution under the statute.

But we must close our brief account of Unitarian Martyrs. Much more might have been said and other instances been adduced, but enough has been advanced to prove the fact—that Unitarians value their principles, and have had those among them who have died for the faith so very dear to them. Reviled and persecuted on earth, they have yet their eternal home in Heaven, because for their Master they have borne and have had patience, and for his name's sake have laboured and not fainted.

CHRISTIANITY NO MYSTERY.

Religion is a Revelation. Many account it a mystery; and it is connected with many mysteries, but in itself it is imaged by light, not darkness; by knowledge, not ignorance; by clearness, not obscurity. Great *was* the mystery, the secret; but great *is* the revelation. There is a maxim in courts, that "ignorance of the laws excuses no one," and it is applicable to our spiritual obligations. Have they not been declared from the house-tops? Has not Moses come with the law, and Jesus with grace and truth? Have not prophets warned, and apostles preached? Have not psalmists sung the praises of God, and evangelists written the words of the infallible Teacher? What is the Bible throughout but a light-bearer—a clearer up of life's heavy, brooding mystery—an illuminator of the path of duty—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel"—sending its beams even through the dark portals of the tomb, into the fair country beyond?

Among the many interesting points of view in which we may regard revealed religion, we love to dwell on this one of its wise, intelligent aspects, its clear, enlightening influence, its reasonable service, its common-sense adaptation, its admirable keeping with all the other parts of the divine system, and all the faculties and capacities of our own nature. Often its character is summed up in the word "wisdom." They are pronounced "fools" who reject it. Its communications are declared to be so plain, that "he may run who readeth them." Our Saviour makes the invitation so broad, that "he who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Again and again, the holy teachers remonstrate: "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord thy God?" "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets." What should we think of the teacher that gave lessons too blind for his pupils to comprehend? or the general who uses orders such as his soldiers had no clue to? And what would be our impression of God, if he has still further mystified his providence and government to man, not cleared them up, by his revelation.

No; religion is light. But, strange to say, its very character as a revelation, as the dissolver of doubts, as the settler of life's problem, and the grand interpretation of its riddle, seems not welcome to many men. Ten will quote to you, "Great is the mystery of godliness," where one will repeat, "Write the vision; make it plain with tables, that he may run that readeth it."

Why, we are ready to ask is there this disposition to make religion hard? Why do men love the dark, the obscure, the mysterious, instead of the plain, the simple, the reasonable, and the intelligible? This tendency, we believe, is a perverse one, and needs correction. There are causes for it which ought to be understood, will clear up, for many minds, a whole region of mists and clouds and dismal nightmare.

One very common habit of many unreligious, not to say irreligious persons, is to get off from a personal sense of duty, and a practical and efficient performance of religious obligations, by saying: "Oh! it is all a mystery! Religion is a stupendous system of guess-work. Men do not know, but they believe and take it for granted. They talk familiarly about God, but what do they know respecting him? Have they heard his voice at any time, or seen his shape? They preach about the future life. But where is it? What is it? Has any 'traveller e'er returned from that bourne?'"

But there is a mixing up of two sets of notions, which must, in order to have clear and satisfactory ideas, be kept entirely separate and distinct. There *are* mysteries, none can deny. They are in the heavens overhead, and in the earth we tread upon, and in the waters under the earth—mysteries in air, light, and fire, and water, and electricity—mysteries in leaf, and flower, and trunk, and root—mysteries in our food, clothing, houses—mysteries in ourselves (when we touch our flesh, we touch a bottomless mystery)—mysteries in night and day, summer and winter. The very soil under our feet is a problem we cannot solve. What is it? Whence did it come? Did God produce it out of nothing, as the old catechism taught that he made all things "out of nothing?" or did he not rather create it and all things out of himself, the all-powerful, all-glorious Reality, and essential substance of all. What a mystery, dread, fathomless, ever mocking us, is evil! What a mystery hangs over the cradle, and what a mystery over the coffin! What mysteries we are! and what mysteries we pursue! What a mystery is peace! and what a blinding, buffeting mystery is war! The universe is solid with mysteries. God is a mystery. Christ is a mystery. Heaven is an infinite, everlasting mystery.

But the point is here: Because these things are mysteries, it by no means follows that all are mysteries. If we do not know all about God, and there is much still hidden, yet we know something about him, and that something is a glorious, comforting reality. We know that he exists. We know that he is our Heavenly Father. We know enough for duty, enough for comfort and hope. Mystery means something secret, hidden. Now, much that was hidden is now made known. This is the name and nature of revelation. It is what is revealed, made clear, brought into the light. The famous passage from Paul is not interpreted aright: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." But the idea is, great *was* the mystery, the secret, the hidden truth; but it *is* now a revelation, as the subsequent words declare—"*manifest* in the flesh, *seen* of angels, *preached* unto the Gentiles," etc., all of which indicate that what was before unknown is now well known, and that what was before whispered in the ear is now preached from the house-tops.

While, accordingly, we confess our ignorance, our limited faculties, and necessary weakness; while we see the walls of darkness and ancient night still hem us in on every side; and while it must be plain that no consciousness of ours can enter and appropriate the animal world, and experience below us, or the angelic, arch-angelic, cherubic, or seraphic worlds, or the experience above us, rising and shining, in rank above rank, toward the ineffable Godhead, yet we must, for the practical uses of religion, distinctly understand that we know all that is necessary to know for duty, for character, for the leading of a good life, and for a reasonable happiness. We repeat it again, religion is a revelation; that is its distinctive characteristic. It comes not to make the darkness visible, but to disperse so much of the darkness as is in the way of our interest and happiness. And for this purpose, faith is equivalent to knowledge. It is as good to believe as it is to know. Yes, far better. Trust in the certainty of our spiritual nature, as eye-sight or ear-sound is the certainty of our physical nature. The things we hold by believing, we hold just as firmly and satisfactorily as we do the things we hold by the presumed positiveness of the senses. There is a so-called "positive philosophy" at the present day, and many are much enamoured with it; but our "positive" philosophy is our spiritual philosophy. Therefore, we say it is important to understand that while there are many things which the Bible does not undertake to explain, there is no excuse for walking in darkness after we have seen its radiant and cheering pages. It is light. It is wisdom. It is a sun in the heavens. They who do not see are blind. The fault is not in the sun, that gives light, but in the eye that does not see the light.

There is, too, no exclusiveness in Christianity. Unlike the ancient religions of Greece and Rome, it has no esoteric distinctions of doctrine—some knowledge for those outside, and some for those inside. All its truths stand open to all. Its portals welcome all, and admit all to its innermost recesses and holy of holies, who are of a humble mind, whether high or low, rich or poor. There is no initiated and uninitated classes. Thank God, we live, and may we ever live, in a land of civil and religious freedom, where we can worship our Maker, and believe in our Saviour, according to our own consciences! And were we to search after that soul in the whole land, where the image of God shines fairest and clearest, we should, perhaps, find it among the contrabands of the Eastern Shore, or the denizens of a wretched attic in the city tenant-house. For all the means and materials to the grandest virtue, to the most heroic devotion, and the most spotless holiness, are to be found in the soul, in God, and in that mediatorial Person, Christ, and that mediatorial book, the

Bible, which bring the soul and God together. As all the most obtruse and difficult mathematical problems depend for their working upon the four fundamental rules of arithmetic—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; as the most intricate and magnificent pieces of music are the product of combinations of simple sounds measured on the gamut scale, so are the richest, loftiest, and most Godlike traits of character but the result of a few healthy faculties of the soul working according to the Divine guidance and Spirit. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith. The greatest and best things are the simplest.

The commandments of God, then, are plain. The promises are clear. If we are in doubt, in unhappiness in our religious faith, is it not owing to some sediment of passion or sin, that has not yet settled clear? Are we not in some way engaged in the impractical scheme of "keeping back part of the price"—of serving God somewhat, and the world somewhat—and of not yielding ourselves up to a total, active, and unconditional loyalty to our rightful Lord and Master?

If light seems to be dark and hard, its providences mysteries, its distinctions, inequalities of condition, health, and happiness, inscrutable, let us not stop there; let us not acquiesce in the mere despairing tone and say, "Ah! it is a great mystery, a riddle we cannot solve." No, we owe it to our Maker, our own soul, to revelation, to the suffering, dying Christ, to take a clearer and more cheerful view of our existence. Hath he not showed thee, O man, what is good? Has he not woven it into every fibre of your conscience? Has he not flashed it forth in your reason and inner light? Has he not written it all over the pages of his word, in letters of illumination and love? Is it not ingratitude, folly, sin, to fling away the price put into your hands to get wisdom, close virtually the blessed book, and exclaim in despondency, "Oh! we do not know; it is a great mystery?" In society, to speak of a thing as mystery, or as mysterious, gives it a stigma, and brands it with suspicion. So it is a species of imputation on Providence to call it mysterious. The fact is, we do know. We have been taught. A great and heavenly Instructor has come, and he has taught us so plainly, that little children can understand him, and can love his precious lessons of truth and study. We do not say that a bad man will not find life a great riddle. We do not say that old-world churches, coming out of the dark ages, and with a great deal of the darkness still hanging about them, have not made in some measure a mystification of this clear and beautiful revelation, pure and white as heavenly light. We believe they have. We believe such doctrines as those contained in Calvin's Institutes, in the Shorter and Longer Catechism, in the Thirty-nine Articles, in the Five Points of Calvin, in the creeds of Athanasius and Nice, in the theology of Augustine—all alive, living, potent, and preached to-day over more than half of Christendom—have done and are doing much to colour and obscure the pure teachings of Christ.

Let us rather come directly to the New Testament. Let us see that it is a book of light, not of darkness. Some passages are hard to understand; but we can skip those. There are others that are as clear as noonday. Let us understand that it is sin and error and superstition that dole over life, and affront God and his love by calling it a mystery. It is a mystery in one sense, but not in the sense in which the doubter, complainer, and critic represent it. It is a mystery, not because it is misty, or dark, or terrible, or inscrutable, but because it is great, glorious, sublime—because it has grand heights which we cannot yet ascend, infinite depths, which we cannot fathom, endless durations which we cannot grasp, and joys, and ecstasies, and riches such as we can only see as through a glass darkly.

But here and now what we really need as a leverage of immense force to raise and empower our religious institutions, is not so much more feeling and emotion, more faith even, as practical, plain understanding of our faith, and a more direct and common-sensible method of dealing with all its sacred interests.

But begin here and now the life of God in your soul, and the morning mists of your sonl, and the morniag mists of your being will rise and float before the Sun of Righteousness, mounting higher and higher into the heavens. Do right, do good, and the next step will be plainer. It is not intellectual acumen, but it is moral principle, and a fearless sense of right, and a hoping spirit of love, which clear up the dark passages of life. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.* Let justice be done, though the heavens fall. It is so in private character. It is so in public affairs. The chief solvent of all that is dark or perplexing in life is a virtuous and believing soul. The good man only can read the Sphinx's riddle. We can see the light most clearly, not when we talk with the philosopher, but when we pray with the Christian. For as we gain that higher plane of faith, we rise above the clouds that beset the earth-bound soul, and see God's stars, that shine from the heaven of heavens, bright, holy, and eternal.—*Christian Inquirer.*

THE TRUE RELATION OF THE STATE TO RELIGION.

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WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

PERSONAL BEAUTY.—Personal beauty is a letter of recommendation written by the hand of divinity, but unfrequently dishonoured by the bearer.

REMEMBER THIS.—When we do any good with labour, the labour passes away, and the good remains. When we do any evil with pleasure, the pleasure passes away, and the evil remains.

SIMPLE JUSTICE.—To do to others as we would have them do to us, is simple justice, though we fancy it vast benevolence. Hence Confucius' great maxim: "Humanity is the equity of the heart."

EXERCISE. — A lady consulted Abernethy. "Do you know my usual fee?" said he. Two guineas were laid on the table. Putting them into his pocket, he drew out a sixpence, and said, "There, take that, and buy a skipping-rope, for you want exercise. Good morning."

COMMON SENSE *versus* CALVINISM. — Aurelius Augustinus was Bishop of Hippo in Africa, and died in the year 430. He was the first propagator, if not the inventor of those absurd doctrines, which were reduced into a system by John Calvin.

The opinions of 'holy' Augustin I scorn,
By Calvinist doctors no more will be fudg'd;
For if we were judg'd before we were born,
'Tis plain that we never were born to be judg'd.

THE PIETY THE WORLD HATES.—It is not true that the world hates piety. The modest and unobtrusive piety which fills the heart with all human charities, and makes a man gentle to others and severe to himself is an object of universal love and veneration. But mankind hate the garb of piety; they hate canting and hypocrisy; they hate advertisers and quacks in piety; they do not choose to be insulted; they love to tear folly and impudence from the altar, which should only be a sanctuary for the wretched and the good.—*Sidney Smith.*

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE? — Wendell Phillips, in his eulogy upon Theodore Parker, said: The very last page those busy fingers ever wrote, tells the child's story, than which, he said, "no event in my life has made so deep and lasting an impression on me." "A little boy in petticoats, in my fourth year, my father sent me from the field home." "A spotted tortoise, in shallow water at the foot of a rhodora, caught his sight, and he lifted his stick to strike it, when a voice within said it was wrong." "I stood with lifted stick, in wonder at the new emotion, till rhodora and tortoise vanished from my sight. I hastened home, and asked my mother what it was that told me it was wrong. Wiping a tear with her apron, and taking me in her arms, she said: 'Some men call it conscience; but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey it, then it will speak clearer, and always guide you right. But if you turn a deaf ear or disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you in the dark and without a guide.'"

MAKING FREE WITH THE COMMANDMENTS. —Dr. Lockhart once, on a journey, stopped to pass the Sabbath at a public-house. On entering the parlour on Sabbath morning, as he was about setting out for church, he found two gentlemen preparing to play a game of chess. "Gentlemen," said he, "have you locked up your carpet-bags carefully?" "No. What are there thieves in this house?" they asked. "I do not say that," replied the doctor; "only I was thinking if the servants come in and find you making free with the *fourth* commandment, they may think of making free with the *eighth*." The men thought there was something in this, and laid aside their game.

HEAVEN.—When I was a boy I thought of heaven as a great shining city with vast walls, and domes, and spires, and with nobody in it except white tenuous angels who were strangers to me. By and by my little brother died, and I thought of a great city with walls, and domes, and spires, and a flock of cold unknown angels, and one little fellow that I was acquainted with. He was the only one I knew in heaven at that time. Then another brother died, and there were two that I knew. Then my acquaintances began to die, and a little crowd continually grew. But it was not till I had sent one of my little children to his grand-parent—God—that I began to think that I had got a little in myself. A second went, a third went, a fourth went, and by that time I had so many acquaintances in heaven, that I did not see any more walls, and domes, and spires. I began to think of the residents of the celestial city. And now there have so many of my acquaintances gone there, that it sometimes seems to me that I know more that are in heaven than I do that are on earth.—*Rev. H. W. Beecher.*

BIGOTRY IN FRANCE.—"A Protestant child," says the *Siècle*, "having lately died in the commune of Lirac (Gard), a deacon, delegated by the Presbyteral Council of the Church of Uzes, went to the mayor, who appeared to consent to the legitimate request which was made him, for a respectable place for the burial of the child in the cemetery of the commune. The cure refused to even allow the corpse to enter the ground; the mayor applied to the sub-prefect of Uzes, who replied that the cemetery was in the hands of the mayor, and that it was for him to have the law duly executed. The mayor then declared that the gates of the cemetery should be opened, but that the cursed child must be buried in the corner reserved for persons executed. Three days having elapsed in the negotiations, the parents of the innocent child were obliged to accept the decision and inter the body in a place branded with reprobation. The Consistory of Uzes has fulfilled its duty by addressing to the sub-prefect of the arrondissement a protest against a fact so evidently contrary to the principle of equality of all citizens in the eye of the law, to freedom of religious opinions, and to that separation between the spiritual and temporal powers without which no liberty can exist."

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